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Executive Director

August 29, 2002

Mr. Dennis DeVany
Office of Aviation Analysis
U.S. Dept of Transportation
X53, Room 6401
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

OST-1997-2842-31

Re: EAS to Massena, Ogdensburg,
& Watertown New York

Dear Mr. DeVany:

The Massena, Ogdensburg, and Watertown Airports have reviewed the four proposals submitted to your office to provide Essential Air Service to the above three airports. It is our recommendation that Mesa Airways' proposal providing three flights per day from Massena and Ogdensburg to Albany and three flights per day from Watertown to Pittsburgh be selected to serve these airports for the next two years. We recognize that this is a change in current service, but it is one that will cost less than the current subsidy, and we believe it is the service that commands the support of those people in Northern New York utilizing commercial air service.

Our current service is provided by Mesa Airways. Three flights per day connect to U.S. Airway's hub in Pittsburgh. Ridership for Massena and Ogdensburg has been declining for recent years, and it was believed that this was due primarily to the high fares, destination, and long flights in small planes that our local service provided. Watertown, on the other hand, with its proximity to Fort Drum, saw its ridership remain steady. Soldiers from Fort Drum relied on this service to transfer to different military posts throughout the United States.

Massena and Ogdensburg commissioned an independent study to estimate the corporate/institutional demand for air service from their respective airports. The study, completed in April of this year by the Merwin Rural Services Institute (MRSI), indicated that 70% of the respondents would be more likely to utilize Ogdensburg/Massena air service if the destination hub for that service was changed from Pittsburgh to Albany. Based on the survey responses and other factors, MRSI estimated that the level of overall additional demand for local air service to

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Albany could approach 6,000 tickets per year, if the proposed service to Albany was marketed correctly and as long as the service provided convenient schedules and competitive fares." We enclose a copy of this study for your reference.

Why Albany? Albany is the capital of New York State, in the area served by Massena and Ogdensburg airports, over 30 percent of the workforce is employed by the public sector with headquarters in the Albany area. Although Albany County Airport is not a hub, it is growing rapidly and does provide a significant number of connecting flights at competitive rates to anywhere in the United States. The proposed flight time to Albany is approximately one hour compared to two hours to Pittsburgh. Both flights are on the same 19-passenger plane.

Watertown passengers will experience a quicker turnaround, as the planes will now fly directly to Pittsburgh instead of stopping in Massena and Ogdensburg. This dedicated service will also ensure more seats available for the Watertown passengers because of the direct flight.

If the U.S. Department of Transportation approves our recommendation, Massena and Ogdensburg are prepared to market this new service in an appropriate manner. Collectively, we are prepared to establish a \$15,000 budget to promote this new service, and we intend to ask Mesa Airways to contribute \$10,000 of their advertising budget for this purpose. Promotion would start with announcing the new service to all the corporate/ institutional respondents to the MRSI study and to all the area travel bureaus, followed with advertising in local newspapers, radio, and television.

We hope your agency will consider all of the above in reaching a decision on how Essential Air Service is going to be provided to Northern New York for the next two years. We recognize that we are asking for a change in service, but we believe our choice is sound based on the above analysis. We also believe that this is the only service that will win the support of the traveling public.

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If you have any questions or desire any additional information,
please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,



Joseph E. Tracy
Deputy Executive Director

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Enclosures

Co: Sandy Cook, Town Supervisor, Massena
Jerry Hiller, City Manager, Watertown
John Egan, CEO, Albany County Airport Authority
Rick Chimera, NYS Department of Transportation